

**Board of Forestry and Fire Protection
Range Management Advisory Committee (RMAC)**

**Minutes
July 13, 2006**

Attending:

RMAC:

Representing

Ken Zimmerman	California Cattlemen's Association
Mike Connor	Public Member
Clancy Dutra	California Farm Bureau Federation
Henry Giacomini	California Farm Bureau Federation
J.R. McCollister	Public Member
Scott Carnegie	California Forestry Association
Mel Thompson	California Wool Growers Association
Jeff Stephens	CDF / RMAC Executive Secretary

Members of the Public:

Lynn Huntsinger	UC Berkeley
Rich Walker	CDF FRAP
Noelle Cremers	California Farm Bureau Federation
Tony Francois	California Farm Bureau Federation
Mike Chapel	USFS
Andrea Fox	California Farm Bureau Federation
Russ Henly	CDF

Items 1, 2, & 3. Call to Order and Introductions:

Ken Zimmerman called the meeting to order at 1:00 P.M. Introductions of all present were made. He then asked for a review and approval of the May and June, 2006 minutes of the full committee. Corrections were noted by Jeff Stephens. Minutes for May and June meetings were approved with corrections by unanimous vote.

Item 4. Status of the State Fire Plan:

J.R. McCollister and Jeff Stephens attended the July RPC meeting and reported on the proceedings. J.R. McCollister stated that the Fire Plan dominated the RPC agenda, and that the discussion was focused on content taken from the Assessment of the 1996 Fire Plan, distributed to RMAC at a previous meeting ("An Assessment of the 1996 Fire Plan: A Framework for Minimizing Costs and Losses from Wildland Fires"). Chris Zimny representing CDF stated his

investigation revealed that the 1996 Plan has proven to be a visionary document that allows the CDF to assess fire protection needs into the future; however, it is not clear to what degree the Plan has been implemented in all Units.

J.R. McCollister added that the 1996 Fire Plan was purposely written with flexibility to allow Units the ability to assess need and carry out individual Unit Plans. But this did not provide a means for collecting the statistical information that determines Plan effectiveness. Henry Giacomini brought up the Advisory Committee to which RMAC is to be named as a member. Jeff Stephens explained that the Advisory Committee is inactive at this point. J.R. McCollister expressed the need to follow the process and promote rangeland interests and prevent domination by high values at risk.

The discussion turned to where RMAC should have input with development of the Fire Plan. Jeff Stephens stated that in his opinion there are two avenues for RMAC involvement. One is regular attendance at the RPC meetings whenever the Fire Plan is on the agenda; and two is as a member of the Advisory Committee if and when it becomes active.

Mike Connor moved that J.R. McCollister be the RMAC representative to the Fire Plan Committee. Clancy Dutra seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Item 5, Discussion of the Concept Paper: "Integrating Natural Resource Management in California with Resource Conservation:

Ken Zimmerman initiated discussion indicating that the paper began as observations he had made concerning the use of public funds. He provided a brief history indicating that the Board's Policy Committee accepted the paper as an issue that should be pursued by RMAC. Two copies were made available to RMAC; the original presented to the Board's Policy Committee, and the other an attempt by Ken Zimmerman to rewrite the paper in a third party format. A working group meeting was held this morning (7-13-06) to develop ideas on how to proceed with the paper. Ken Zimmerman stated that the plan is to move forward by developing a letter to selected groups soliciting participation as follows:

1. Marilyn Cundiff (WCB)
2. Jay Chamberlin (Resources Agency)
3. Karen & Darryl Sweet
4. Tim Koopman (SF Water & Power?)
5. U.C. Santa Cruz authors of the draft paper.
6. State Parks
7. DFG
8. USFS
9. BLM

10. Tacy Currey (CARCD)
11. State Bonds Expert

He proposed a meeting of this group (above named) in September to talk about the concepts mentioned in the paper. It would be a noticed Focus Group meeting. The introduction will be developed by Scott Carnegie and Mel Thompson.

Clancy Dutra asked that the September meeting be rescheduled. RMAC decided to reschedule the meeting for September 19-20. Ken Zimmerman stated that he wished to reserve the afternoon of the 19th for the Policy Focus Group and use that time to discuss the concept paper for integration of resource management. Henry Giacomini stated that he would like to reserve time for the Water Group. J.R. McCollister stated that a meeting of the Vegetation Management Group may also be needed.

Item 6. Update on AB 2479, Noxious and Invasive Weeds Funding:

Andrea Fox with the Farm Bureau was asked to provide an update by Ken Zimmerman. AB 2479 is now in Senate Appropriations. \$1.5 million remains in the bill following reductions by the Senate Budget Subcommittee. This only leaves \$35,000 for each WMA. Also the money must be spent within the fiscal year. The effort did generate a lot of recognition for the weed problem in California. She predicts that the bill will move through for approval by the governor in its present form. Ken Zimmerman asked about the advisory committee and its make-up. Andrea Fox responded by stating that this is under discussion at CDFA. Her understanding is that the CDFA will stay within the "spirit" of the legislative proponents in formation of the committee. A primary focus for next year is to secure funding for future years. Ken Zimmerman stressed the need for the statewide advisory committee to service the needs of all WMA's. He cited examples discovered while being a member of the National Invasive Weeds Council where the needs of some areas are neglected in order to demonstrate accomplishment in other areas due to political pressures.

Item 7. CDF Vegetation Treatment Program Policy Review:

Jeff Stephens began discussion stating that the VTP Policy Review is occurring concurrently with the VTP EIR development. He also stated that the Policy review is a product of the RMAC VMP Recommendations made to the RPC. The Board has elected to examine multiple programs in the Department including the Range Improvement Program as noted by J.R. McCollister in the discussion.

Jeff Stephens reviewed the CDF team members on the VTP Policy Review Committee including two Board members Pam Giacomini and Mark Bosetti. The committee has met only once. Work assignments are yet to be made. Ken Zimmerman asked what role RMAC may play in this process of program review.

Jeff Stephens stated that one of the tasks of this committee will be to solicit stakeholder input of which RMAC is one. The VTP Policy Review Committee also reports to the RPC as does the RMAC.

Item 8. VTP EIR Status Report:

Rich Walker with FRAP provided a PowerPoint presentation giving an overview of the EIR. The EIR is intended to cover multiple vegetation types using a variety of CDF programs. CDF also hopes to allow other agencies to tier off the EIR for their own uses.

The Board is now the lead agency on the EIR. FRAP is working in cooperation with BBWA (contractor) to complete the EIR. It is an ambitious effort with potentially 37 million acres of area that must be analyzed for potential impacts. CDF is using GIS technology to better assess potential impacts. FRAP is working on the Environmental Setting and Cumulative Effects sections. BBWA is working on all other sections, and have submitted drafts on Chapters 1-3.

Rich Walker explained the decision criteria being proposed to determine if a project will take place. Project constraints are used such as housing density, wildlife, and slope to make these determinations. Ken Zimmerman asked if there will be a priority ranking at the state level for determining which projects will be carried out. Mr. Walker explained that the decision criteria he is explaining is at the program level for cumulative impacts assessment. The decision to do a specific project will continue to reside with the CDF Units. Russ Henly agreed stating that this analysis is for determining where projects are likely to occur for the purpose of assessing cumulative impacts on a program level.

Rich Walker provided maps comparing where the CMP (Chaparral Management Program) EIR applies and the new area served by the VTP EIR. Fire threat and history is being explored as a means for determining priority areas.

Ken Zimmerman asked if the CDF can use the EIR to determine cost of treatments and whether it would be a tool to use when asking the legislature for additional funding. Russ Henly explained that simultaneous with the creation of the EIR is the Board's review of all vegetation treatment programs and this may provide the direction for seeking funding as determined by program needs. He also mentioned California playing a lead role in global climate change and carbon sequestration which also is related to the management of vegetation.

Mike Connor and J.R. McCollister expressed concern with the projected acreage figures stated in the drafts for the various programs. Rich Walker and Russ Henly explained that these values were an initial estimate made by the consultants based on past history of the program, and that other techniques are being used to expand these values. The Board will also have a say in determining these figures based on

their perception of the need for treatment and the Department's ability with current resources.

Ken Zimmerman noted that there is a need to update the vegetation maps used in the analysis so that it may be determined when an area was treated last and when a follow-up is warranted. Russ Henly stated that FRAP is working with the most recent maps available for the cumulative impacts analysis, and that the kind of updates specific to project level analysis is more appropriate at the Unit level with Unit Fire Plans.

J.R. McCollister asked for an explanation of the preferred program versus the status quo and also a status of what has been written to date. Russ Henly and Jeff Stephens explained that the preferred program would be an integration of CDF vegetation treatment practices under one EIR without the need for additional environmental documentation versus the status quo which is all programs functioning independent of one another, and for some programs like VMP the inability to operate in all vegetation types.

J.R. McCollister noted and was supported with comment from Mike Connor that prescribed herbivory was not given sufficient emphasis under the alternatives, and that it was grouped in a minor way under "Biological Treatments." Jeff Stephens stated that the description of herbivory in the alternatives was based on what the Department did in the past, which in the case of biological treatments is "negligible." The new approach as explained by Rich Walker is to expand the area of treatment based on need. Jeff Stephens stated that RMAC needs to bring this concern forward with comment during draft review and with comment to the RPC.

Public attendees raised the issue of whether grazing done independently of CDF is addressed within the document as a treatment for vegetation control. The point was also made that grazing is a cost effective method for control of vegetation and the Department through the funding of infrastructure may find it advantageous to other methods. Subsequent discussion between Ken Zimmerman, Mike Connor, Jeff Stephens and Russ Henly revealed that CDF is not presently considering grazing by producers independent of CDF as a "project" under CEQA that must be analyzed for potential impacts. CDF must address within the cumulative impacts assessment those practices that we (CDF) initiate such as hiring a contractor to maintain a fuel break with livestock. This would be considered a project under CEQA and therefore must be considered for environmental impact. Russ Henly pointed out that grazing by producers independent of CDF projects is still part of the environmental setting for the EIR, and therefore must be addressed in the cumulative impacts portion of the EIR on the program level.

J.R. McCollister asked what are CDF's plans for involving stakeholder groups in the EIR process. Jeff Stephens and Russ Henly responded stating that public scoping meetings have already been conducted, and the next opportunity for formal comment would be public hearings for the Draft EIR.

Item 9 and 10. Focus Group reports and Agency and Association Reports:

Ken Zimmerman combined both the Agency and Association Reports with the Focus Group Reports given that Focus Group issues dealing primarily with water were expected to dominate both agenda items.

Water Focus Group – Henry Giacomini reporting:

Henry Giacomini provided a brief history of the correspondence that has been flowing between RMAC, The Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, and The State Water Board. The letter prepared by RMAC endorsing an analysis of the Water Board's non-point source (NPS) policy by the producer groups has not received public review by the RPC.

Tony Francois also provided a historical account of the NPS issue and past meetings with the Lahontan Regional Water Quality and State Board personnel. Approximately 1 year ago Tony Francois attended a meeting with Lahontan that revealed their primary concerns were with the Bridgeport reservoir area and potential impacts to Lake Tahoe from tributaries. It was Lahontan's hope to focus on this primary area of concern and then rely on the State Board to address other areas with a stepped down program. Approximately six months later a meeting was held in Sacramento with the Water Board and the announcement was made that a statewide NPS program was being proposed that would supersede the 1995 Plan.

Tony Francois and Noelle Cremers commented that there is concern for the ranchers who were told initially that the 1995 Plan would satisfy regulatory requirements for NPS. Tony Francois posed the question of excusing ranchers from the permitting process provided they are participating in the 1995 Plan. The Board's response was that current law required a permitting process. Tony Francois stated this is a fundamental change from allowing voluntary compliance under a tool like the 1995 Plan. He further reviewed code section under Water Code Section 13369 which specifically calls for the use of non-regulatory methods for the implementation of the State's NPS program.

Mike Chapel with the USFS thanked the group for the update and stated that the USFS will be meeting with State Board on Monday of the following week. He further stated that the one area where USFS has received attention from the State Board is in the area of vegetation management. The USFS has management plans that address NPS and he believes that it is because of the management plans that the Water Board has not been concerned with their practices other than vegetation management. Presently the USFS does not have a voluntary program; they do waivers. Henry Giacomini asked for clarification on whether the USFS does permits for all activities. Mr. Chapel responded stating they do waivers on vegetation management activities only. Mr. Giacomini stated that this constitutes a voluntary program on activities other than vegetation management. Mr. Chapel

then stated that the USFS is designated as a Water Quality Management Agency. This gives them authority to submit documents that demonstrate maintenance of water quality. At this point the USFS is not sure what the State Board or Regional Boards will ask of them for compliance with the new policy.

Mike Chapel stated that the first question they will ask of the Water Board is, what is it that needs to be fixed regarding the current method of doing business.

Ken Zimmerman noted that any agreements made between private or public land managers have the potential to “spill over” into each others area of control. It would be best that all parties talk before such agreements are made. Mike Chapel stated that he would report back to the RMAC on what their experience is following their meeting with Water Quality.

Discussion among RMAC and producer group representatives present turned to the recommended course of action given that the RPC has not formerly discussed the RMAC findings in committee. The consensus was to not press the issue until after the August RPC meeting in order to provide the RPC and the Board ample time to consider the matter.

Jeff Stephens asked the question, what are the potential impacts to activities in the state if the NPS program proposed for grazing is carried forward. Tony Francois responded stating that the potential is for every NPS producing activity to become a permitted process. For example, rural residential subdivisions would fall under a permitted process by this application of the NPS policy.

California Farm Bureau Federation, Noelle Cremers reporting:

Noelle Cremers reviewed the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) Wildlife Draft Action Plan; a plan to manage wildlife in a manner that avoids listing species. The document is divided up into regions. RMAC members were encouraged to review their respective regions. Grazing is repeatedly brought up within the documents as a threat to wildlife. Ms Cremers stated that she found little evidence in the document to support grazing as a threat to wildlife. She also passed out a sheet that explains how to submit comment on the documents.

Item 11, RMAC Minutes Format and Content:

The issue under discussion is to whether a change in format is warranted. The proposed change is to one that is less detailed such as a summary/action item format. Discussion resulted citing the advantages to the current format as opposed to an alternative, such as use of the minutes to write year end reports. The discussion ended with a motion by Henry Giacomini to table the item. Mike Connor asked if by the term “table” the intent is to drop the issue. Henry Giacomini confirmed that this is his meaning. The motion carried by unanimous vote of the RMAC.

Item 12. New and Unfinished Business:

Jeff Stephens distributed two letters from Joe Rawitzer per Mr. Rawitzer's request that they be made available to RMAC.

Mike Connor asked if the PFEC had reviewed the latest CRM issue. Jeff Stephens stated that he has no feed back from PFEC. Mel Thompson reminded the RMAC that each committee member had the assignment of speaking to their respective producer groups and asking for feedback on the CRM issue. He did this with the California Wool Growers Association; however, the CWGA did not submit a formal opinion on the issue. Jeff Stephens reported that he spoke with Mr. Roney, a livestock producer, who expressed his objections to any existing or proposed regulations that require a CRM for management of his property. Ken Zimmerman stated that he presented the issue to the Midyear CCA meeting, and that CCA chose not to take any action on the issue. Henry Giacomini stated that the fear among landowners lies with the potential of CRM requirements becoming analogous to what is currently required for an RPF and professional forestry. Mike Connor stated that expansion of regulation such as the 10% rule per Eric Huff's comments would be difficult. Ken Zimmerman stated that what may be the appropriate course is to document what has been learned in a paper that any interested party or association can access. Henry Giacomini and Mel Thompson concurred with this approach with Mr. Giacomini stating that the time for expansion may come later.

Item 13. Public Comment:

None

Meeting Adjourned 12:00 Noon

Action Items:

1. Mike Connor moved that J.R. McCollister be the RMAC representative to the Fire Plan Committee. Clancy Dutra seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.
2. Henry Giacomini motioned to table item 11. The motion carried by unanimous vote of the RMAC.